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NURSING IN MISSION STATIONS

PROGRESS IN TREATING LEPROSY

The JOURNAL has commented, in the past, on the experiments which were being tried for the cure of leprosy. A Brooklyn subscriber sends us the following encouraging report published by Dr. E. C. Cort, a Presbyterian missionary, in the *Laos News*.

From the time of Moses until now, leprosy has been regarded with loathing and fear by people of all races. While there have been from time to time authentic cases of spontaneous cure of the disease, these were so rare as to be negligible. Innumerable remedies, drugs and incantations have been tried, sometimes with apparently temporary success. Of all these, the most promising has been an aromatic vegetable oil which has been extensively used in India for many years and called Chaulmoogra Oil. This was administered by mouth and, while improvement undoubtedly resulted in some cases, the length of time that the oil could be taken was very limited, as the patient soon developed such an aversion to its taste that it was impossible for him to take it. Dr. Heiser and his associates, working on the large leper problem in the Philippines, began to experiment with this oil but realized early the impossibility of oral administration. A scheme of intermuscular or subcutaneous injection was finally worked out and after a few cases had been cured of all manifestation of the disease and had remained free from relapse for two years or more, their results and the formula of the Chaulmoogra Oil mixture, that they were using, were made public.

This was the first ray of light that penetrated the darkness of despair in which these unfortunate lepers lived, and it encouraged us to begin the treatment in the Chiangmai Leper Asylum. Our problem has been more complicated than in the Philippines, where segregation of lepers is compulsory, so it seemed wisest to begin on a campaign of education, describing the favorable results already obtained but emphasizing the painful nature of the injections, the length of time necessary before any improvement could be expected, perhaps a year or more, and insisting on the futility of beginning the treatment unless the patient had the courage and the endurance to persevere. In a short time an urgent demand for the treatment began to appear and, believing that the "psychological moment" had arrived, we began the treatments. This was nine months ago. At first only nine men had the courage to undertake the injections. After a few injections these patients began to report improvement. The aches and pains which had been constantly present before, began to disappear, their appetites improved, and they gained strength. Thus encouraged the number of patients under treatment has increased weekly until, at the present time, there are 128 men, women and children who are receiving the weekly injections. Of these two are practically cured, as all manifestations of the disease have disappeared. One of these is a boy of sixteen and the other a young woman of nineteen. Last week this boy, Ai Ma, announced that he was going to discontinue the treatment as he was already cured, but was persuaded to continue for fear of a relapse. Two or three others are almost clean so that results are encouraging.